



**Remarks**

**By**

**Her Excellency Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe**

**COMESA Secretary General**

**At the**

**COMESA Competition Commission Sensitization  
Workshop for the Zambian Business Community**

**Radisson Blu - Lusaka, Zambia**

**21<sup>st</sup> April, 2022**

**Guest of Honour, The Vice President of the Republic of Zambia, Your Honour Mrs. W.K. Mutale-Nalumango, M.P, represented here by the Minister of Technology and Science, Honourable Felix Mutati, M.P.**

**The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry, Mrs. Chawe P.M. Chuulu**

**The Director and Chief Executive Officer of the COMESA Competition Commission, Dr. Willard Mwemba**

**The Executive Director of the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, Mr. Chilufya Sampa**

**The Chief Executive Officer of the Zambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry**

**Private Sector Representatives,**

**Distinguished Senior Government Officials,**

**Distinguished Participants,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**All Protocols observed**

Let me start by recognising the presence of, and welcoming, the Honourable Minister of Technology and Science, representing the Her Honour, the Vice President of the Republic of Zambia, Mrs. W.K. Mutale-Nalumango, M.P. to this National Sensitization Workshop for the Business Community.

Your presence Honourable Minister is a sign of the continued support by Your Government to the COMESA Secretariat, its Institutions and programmes which are being implemented across the Common Market including Zambia. Most importantly, your presence at this workshop signifies Your Government's recognition of the important role of the private sector as

a critical player in the economic growth and development of the Zambian economy and the wider Common Market. Honourable Minister, my continued collaboration with Government of Zambia through the Coordinating Ministry on COMESA Regional Integration matters has enhanced and indeed facilitated the smooth implementation of COMESA Programmes.

May I also recognise and welcome the business community for whom this event has been specifically organised.

**Honourable Minister, distinguished guests, participants, ladies, and gentlemen**

The theme of this workshop, *“The Role of Competition and Consumer Protection Laws in Post COVID-19 Business Recovery”*, is timely. Since the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic over two years ago, economies across the globe including in COMESA have been greatly affected and the Zambian economy is no exception. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted regional and global value chains, and delays in the production and delivery of goods and services have been a commonplace. The COVID-19 pandemic has generally limited the movement of people, goods and services due to restrictions of entry and exit imposed by countries.

**Honourable Minister, distinguished guests, participants, ladies, and gentlemen**

These developments have challenged the very principals of globalisation under which global and regional markets are modelled and operate. Given the lockdowns and restrictions of movement, countries have appreciated the need for, and importance of, local sourcing of goods and services as an alternative to sourcing on the global market. Within the context of COMESA, *“Answering the Question, Whether the Local Industry can offer an effective substitute to the global market? has become necessary”*. The effectiveness of our COMESA Regional Integration Agenda, which seeks to create borderless trade in goods and services free from tariffs and non-tariff barriers, has indeed been challenged during the times of COVID-19 pandemic. Among the most affected stakeholder in the regional integration process has been the business community, who have either scaled down

operations or ceased operations all together due to delays associated with the sourcing of inputs including the shortage of key raw materials.

**Honourable Minister, distinguished guests, participants, ladies, and gentlemen**

Among the key intervention areas that the Common Market should focus on post-COVID 19 include facilitating and encouraging local production of essential goods and services including COVID-19 related products and vaccines. The private sector has a critical role to play in this area in collaboration with the Member States governments. One benefit of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the realisation that locally, our economies have the potential to self-supply goods and services. Thus, we have seen import substitution of products often imported to the Common Market which are now being sourced locally.

**Honourable Minister, distinguished guests, participants, ladies, and gentlemen**

Another area of focus post-COVID-19 should be identifying regional value chains, formalizing micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME), women and youth owned businesses that promote integrated regional manufacturing and joint industrial projects based on comparative advantage. Further, it is no surprise that among the hardest hit industry by the COVID-19 pandemic has been the tourism and hospitality industry which heavily relies on tourists visiting our countries. Therefore, a key post-COVID-19 strategy for this industry is to transform and enhance the tourism and hospitality industry to operate under COVID-19 conditions. It is also high time our citizenry began patronizing the sector more so that there is less reliance on tourists from outside the Common Market.

**Honourable Minister, distinguished guests, participants, ladies, and gentlemen**

Allow me to also point out the need to enhance digital transformation such as e-commerce and e-trade as a key post-COVID-19 strategy for the Common Market. COVID-19 has helped us appreciate that trade and

commerce can still thrive in the absence of physical contact and with a limited movement of people. However, what has become apparent is the need for supporting digital platform infrastructure which has also proved to be essential in cutting down transaction costs.

**Honourable Minister, distinguished guests, participants, ladies, and gentlemen**

At this juncture, Honourable Minister, allow me to reflect on the subject matter for this Workshop. The enforcement of competition and consumer protection law during the pre- and post-COVID-19 pandemic has remained relevant than ever before. As you may be aware, the mandate of regulating competition in the Common Market is well enshrined under Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty on Co-operation in Trade Liberalisation and Development with Article 55 addressing regulation of competition in the Common Market. Through Article 55, Member States have agreed to prohibit any business practices which negate the objective of free and liberalised trade and which have the objective or effect of preventing, restricting or distorting competition in the Common Market. Competition regulation seeks to ensure that trade liberation in the Common Market thrives under competitive conditions that enhance the welfare of consumers.

**Honourable Minister, distinguished guests, participants, ladies, and gentlemen**

The COMESA Competition Regulations try to regulate competition and protect consumers from offensive business conduct should be keenly enforced during the pre- and post-COVID-19 era. This will ensure that the Regional Integration agenda which the Common Market continues to implement remains relevant and beneficial to the businesses and consumers in the Common Market. As businesses recover from the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential that they appreciate their obligations under the regional competition law including the need to refrain from conduct likely to negatively affect consumer welfare.

The difficulties brought about by COVID-19 have the potential to incentivise businesses to engage in anti-competitive conduct which may result in other

businesses exiting the market, high prices and poor quality of goods and services, difficulties to access markets in other Member States among others. The enforcement of competition laws at both regional and national markets is therefore very important to create a level playing field and thereby ensure that companies compete on innovative ideas which benefits our economies and citizens at large.

**Honourable Minister, distinguished guests, participants, ladies, and gentlemen**

On this note, let me express my appreciation to the COMESA Competition Commission and the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission of Zambia for this timely engagement of the Business Community. I implore the COMESA Competition Commission and the Competition and Consumer Protection of Zambia to continue with the cooperation as it is only through this that our objective of ensuring free and competitive markets in Zambia and beyond will be realise. I have taken note of the eminent speakers who indisputably are authorities in the field of Commerce and competition law regulation. I therefore believe that the interactions during this workshop will be beneficial to our Business Community. I am hopeful that such engagements will go a long way in reviving our struggling economies post COVID-19 pandemic.

**I thank you for your attention.**

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